DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 224 743 SO 014 404

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TITLE Standards for Certification/Preparation of Social Studies Teachers: A Fifty State Study.
PUB DATE Nov 82
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies (Boston, MA, November, 1982).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; General Education; Majors (Students); National Surveys; Social Sciences; *Social Studies; *State Standards; *Teacher Certification; *Teacher Education

ABSTRACT

A national survey determined minimum certification requirements for secondary social studies teachers in general education, professional education, and history/social science. Data were obtained through questionnaires completed by social studies education curriculum specialists and by officials in the certification divisions of state education departments. In some cases, telephone interviews were also conducted. Regarding the general education component, 23 states require some amount of coursework or competency in certain disciplines. Specifications for teacher education exist in 39 states. Regarding history/social science requirements for a social studies major, 40 states require coursework or competency by discipline, some mandating semester-credit-hour minimums. Comparing the state standards with national guidelines established by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC), 41% of the states do not require social studies methods instruction and 31% do not require social foundations of education, both of which are expected by NCSS and NASDTEC. (RM)

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STANDARDS FOR CERTIFICATION/PREPARATION OF SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS: A FIFTY STATE STUDY

by

Wayne Dumas
and
Tom Weible

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SP 014 404

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STANDARDS FOR CERTIFICATION/PREPARATION OF SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS: A FIFTY STATE STUDY

In the latter half of the seventies, American public education suffered repeated assaults of unaccustomed criticism. Teachers were told they had failed--that their students were less skilled and demonstrated less mastery of their subjects than an earlier generation of students. During the eighties, the critics have taken their concern a step further. If children are achieving less, the cause must be poorly prepared teachers who are often lacking in the very skills they are expected to teach. A recent Newsweek poll (Williams, et al., April 20, 1981) indicated that 59% of the respondents felt that teachers must be better trained. The same Newsweek series (Williams, et al., April 27, 1981) concluded that "some states have more requirements for getting a driver's license than for teaching." The validity of these criticisms continues to be clouded by misinformation, confusion about changing demographics of schools and proper interpretations of standardized test scores, and uncertainty about the status of teacher preparation and certification nationally.

In their "National Agenda for Research in Teacher Education in the 1980's" (1981), Hall and Hord have identified as one of eight priority research issues "a more accurate descriptive normative data base about what constitutes the content of teacher education--along with analytic appraisals of what it might or should be." The purpose of this report is to contribute to that agenda by dealing with the general questions of how social studies teachers are prepared in the fifty states, and secondarily, how adequate

that system of preparation is, at least in the limited sense of comparing minimum standards in the fifty states with the most relevant national guideline statements. The guidelines are those established by the National Council for the Social Studies and the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC).

NCSS has produced two documents of significance to this study. In 1966 the Council adopted "Guidelines for the Preparation of Teacher Education" (NCSS, 1967), which may retain some relevance in that it is the only guideline statement to specify minimums and maximums for each of the three major components of a teacher education/certification program. The "Guidelines" recommended a general education component consisting of 25-30% of the total preparation program, a professional teacher education component ranging between 15-25% of the program, and a teaching specialization program in social studies consisting of 50-60% of the total program.

The Council's second document, "Standards for Social Studies Teachers" (NCSS, 1971), recommended that the general education component of the preparation program include "rigorous introductions to humanities, social sciences, physical sciences, and biological sciences" and that, in addition, it "should develop competent communication skills." In the area of professional education the "standards" recommend emphasis on educational psychology, teaching strategies, instructional media, testing and evaluation, internship, and student teaching. In the teaching specialization component the primary recommendation was that each teacher have a "close acquaintance" with at least three social sciences with specialization

in one. In this document, the Council made no recommendations regarding percentage or semester-hour minimums for the three components of certification programs.

Since publication of the 1971 standards, several NCSS writing teams have worked in turn to prepare a revision of that document. At the time of this writing, no revision has been accepted by the Council. The 1971 statement remains the official, albeit somewhat outdated, position.

The NASDTEC Standards (1981) specify that the general education component should require competence in written and oral communication skills, basic mathematical properties, processes, and symbols, and shall require the study of historical and cultural values, customs, and social institutions, both western and non-western, and the studies of the arts, humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences. The professional education component is expected to have experiences or instruction which will "promote constructive interaction among people of differing economic, social, racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds." The program should include "human growth and development, teacher characteristics and behaviors as they relate to the learner, classroom communication processes and skills, diagnostic and instructional techniques for all pupils in the least restrictive environment, special methods in a clinical setting, methods for teaching in the social studies, classroom management techniques, observation and analysis of a variety of teaching models, and study of the leaders, ideas, and movements underlying the development and organization of education in the United States." The "Standards" require that a social

studies specialty consist of a broad base of social studies including history, sociology and cultural anthropology, government, economics, and geography, with specialization in one of these fields.

PROBLEM AND METHOD

The purpose of this investigation was to determine the minimum program standards established by each of the fifty states for the preparation and certification of secondary social studies teachers. Specifically, the goal is to identify the status of: 1) general education requirements, 2) professional education requirements, and 3) history/social science requirements.

The data collection necessarily occurred in several stages. A questionnaire designed to elicit the required responses was sent to the social studies education curriculum specialist in each of the fifty state education departments. This resulted in the return of 31 questionnaires. Where the responses seemed either incomplete or confusing, telephone calls were made to the respondents, and clarification was achieved in all cases. The data for the remaining 19 states was acquired through requesting the necessary information from officials in the certification divisions of the state departments. Here, too, clarifications by telephone were needed in several cases, and it was necessary with five states to obtain the information entirely by telephone interview.

RESULTS

The first concern of this study was with the established minimum certification requirements of the states for secondary social studies teachers in general education, professional education, and

social science/history. The data relating to each of these as general categories are presented in Table 1. For consistency, the data are presented in terms of semester-credit-hours, though in some states the minimum is stated in terms of a percentage of the baccalaureate program. For example, if 30% of the baccalaureate program must be general education, this has been interpreted as 36 semester credit hours of a 120-hour degree program.

It must be noted also that with regard to all three components of the teacher education programs, some states do not specify a minimum. There are several explanations and combinations of explanations for these remaining states. In some cases, particularly with general education these decisions are left entirely to the judgement of teacher education instutitutions. In others, disciplines or courses where work is to be done or competency demonstrated are stated but with no categorical minimum. In several states, education departments negotiate with teacher education institutions for approval of programs, typically employing the NASDTEC Standards as the most important consideration for approval.

More remarkable than the means of state standards presented in Table 1 is the range of minimum standards in general education and social science/history. In general education and history/social science the range between the lowest and the highest state requirements approaches 40 semester-credit-hours.

General Education

Regarding the General Education Component, 15 states specify a semester-credit-hour minimum in certain disciplines for certification. Twenty-three states, including the aforementioned fifteen,

Table 1: Minimum Specifications for Social Studies Teacher Certification in the Fifty States: General Education, Professional Education, Social Science/History

Program Component	No. of States Specifying A Minimum*	Semester Credit Hours	
		Mean	Range
General Education	28	44	22 - 60
Professional Education	35	20	15 - 28
Social Science/ History	38	37	24 - 60

* The remaining states do not specify minimums for the three components.

specify that some amount of coursework, study or competency in certain disciplines is required. This data is presented in Table 2. As was indicated earlier, the states not specifying minimums do so for many reasons. Those which negotiate with institutions for program approval, of course, make no specifications at all. Others have policies which require a "broad representation of arts and science disciplines" or that work be done in at least three or four of a larger number of specified disciplines. Still others have chosen to consider general education requirements as the prerogative of the colleges and universities.

Of those which do make specifications by disciplines, it is important to note that the only general education area which is consistently required for certification is history/social science, often identified as a course in American history and/or American government. Second to this in consistency of requirement is English composition. Most surprising for the infrequency of requirement is that only 30% of the specifying states include "oral communication" as a prerequisite to certification, even though all current national standards recommend such a requirement.

Professional Education

Specifications for the teacher education component of certification programs exist in 39 states. The remaining eleven states operate with various patterns of program approval by the respective state departments of education. Unlike the general education and the history/social science components, teacher education requirements are rarely stated in terms of semester-credit-hour minimums, but in terms of a course, instruction, or developed

Table 2: Minimum General Education Requirements by Discipline

Discipline	Semester Credit Hours Required n=15*		Coursework or Competency Require n=23**	
	Mean	Range	f	%
History/Social Science	9	2 - 12	23	100
Natural Science	5	0 - 12	18	77
Mathematics	2	0 - 6	16	69
English Composition	6	0 - 12	20	87
Humanities	6	0 - 15	17	74
Oral Communication	1	0 - 3	7	30
Health/PE	2	0 - 6	12	52

* Remaining 35 states do not specify semester-credit-hour minimums by discipline.

** Remaining 27 states specify neither semester-credit-hour minimums nor requirements of coursework or competency by discipline.

competency. Student teaching is the single exception in that 20 states specify a minimum amount of work in student teaching. The mean requirement is 7 semester-credit-hours and the range is 5-12.

The remainder of the data regarding the teacher education component is shown in Table 3. Student teaching and educational psychology, including human growth and development, are clearly the only dependable state requirements. Low percentages in virtually every other course or area shown in Table 3 are likely to be alarming to some educators. Perhaps the most alarming, in light of the NASDTEC and NCSS standards and our own sense of self-importance, is the requirement of special methods instruction in only 59% of the specifying states. The special methods and general methods requirements overlap in such a way that no specifying state fails to require one or the other. Other areas recommended by NCSS and/or NASDTEC but infrequently required by the states are studies of the exceptional child/mainstreaming, social foundations of education, early classroom field experiences, methods of teaching reading in the content areas, and multi-cultural education.

History/Social Science

Regarding the specific requirements within history/social science for a social studies major, 40 states require coursework or competency by discipline, some mandating semester-credit-hour minimums. The remaining states operate upon a program approval basis.

Several of the states, including some which specify minimums and some which don't, encourage or insist that institutions

Table 3: Minimum Professional Education Requirements by Area: Number of States Specifying Coursework or Competency

n=39*

Course/Competency Area	f	%
Reading in Content Area	21	54
Educational Psychology	38	97
Social Foundations	27	69
Org./Admin. of Schools	12	31
Early Field Experiences	15	38
Exceptional Child/Mainstreaming	14	36
Tests and Evaluation	15	38
Multi-Cultural Education	12	31
General Teaching Methods	29	74
Special Methods (Social Studies)	23	59
Educational Media	9	23
Student Teaching	39	100

* The remaining 11 states do not specify minimums.

require that at least one area or discipline be studied in depth and that some work be done in at least two or three additional areas within history/social sciences.

The data regarding minimum requirements by discipline are shown in Table 4. As most social studies educators would suspect, the areas most frequently required by those specifying was American history, political science (often American government) and world history. However, this statistic is misleading with regard to history in that four states specify a minimum number of hours in history without designating a minimum for American or world history. In effect, it would be closer to the truth to consider American history as required by all specifying states and world history by 81% rather than by 73% as shown in the table. On the possibly negative side it has to be noted that the NASDTEC guidelines appear to recommend at least an introduction to both American and world histories and each of the social sciences, with sociology/cultural anthropology treated as a single category. This clearly is often not followed. The NASDTEC guideline calling for depth in one social studies field is, as stated earlier, the policy of a substantial minority of the states.

Discussion

General education requirements in the states specifying a minimum percentage of the baccalaureate program for that component may seem to be adequate if one refers only to the mean requirement of 44 semester credit hours or slightly over 40% of the baccalaureate program. However, it must be noted that a large minority of states require less than 40% of baccalaureate work in general

Table 4: Minimum Requirements in History/Social Science by Discipline or Subject Area

n=40*

Discipline/ Subject	Semester Hours Required			Coursework or Competency Required	
	f**	Mean	Range	f***	%
World History	8	6	3 - 10	29	73
American History	14	7	6 - 12	36	90
State Government or History	2	3	3	2	5
Political Science	14	7	3 - 12	32	80
Economics	12	5	3 - 12	28	70
Geography	10	5	3 - 6	25	63
Sociology	8	5	3 - 9	23	58
Anthropology	2	3	3	13	33
Psychology	3	4	3 - 6	11	28
Multi-Cultural	0	0	0	4	10

* The remaining 10 states do not specify requirements by discipline or area.

** Number of states which specify a minimum for each discipline or area.

*** Includes those states which specify semester hour minimums.

studies, with requirements extending as low as 22 semester hours or 18% of a typical baccalaureate program. With reference to both NCSS (1970) and NASDTEC (1981), requirements of some general education work in each of the major arts and sciences, as well as written and oral communication, the record is quite shaky. As noted earlier, only 30% of the specifying states require work in oral communication, while more than one quarter of the specifying states require nothing in mathematics or the humanities. Only history/social science was universally required to be part of the general education component.

The professional education component, as a category, requires a mean of 20 semester credit hours or 17% of the typical baccalaureate program for the states specifying. The range, of course, extends far below this standard to 15 semester hours, 13% of the program. As to the particulars of the teacher education component, it has already been pointed out that numerous problems exist in relation to both NASDTEC (1981) and the 1971 NCSS standards. The primary problem would appear to be the low percentage of states requiring work in the teaching of Reading in the Content Areas, early field experiences, exceptional child/mainstreaming, and multi-cultural education, despite the firm recommendations of NASDTEC (1981) that these be a part of all preparatory programs. All of these are now required by less than 50% of the specifying states. Perhaps even more surprising or disturbing to some social studies educators is the fairly substantial percentage of states not requiring social studies methods instruction (41%) and social foundations of education (31%) both of which are universally

expected by both NASDTEC (1981) and NCSS (1971). The states not requiring special methods for certification would seem clearly to be avoiding this requirement in the interest of small institutions which cannot afford special methods classes in each of the secondary specialties.

There is no current standard with which to compare the mean of 37 semester credit hours in history/social science for the specifying states. Neither NASDTEC nor the NCSS Standards suggest a minimum. However, the range reaching down to 24 semester hours would seem to extend far too low to be consistent with the spirit of any of these sets of national standards. Even the mean would have to be questionable in this regard. As for the particular requirements of the states, little dissatisfaction would likely be expressed with regard to the histories. However, with each of the social sciences there are numerous instances among the states of work not being required in one or several of the social sciences, which conflicts with the NASDTEC guidelines; and in only a minority of states is there a requirement for a special emphasis in one of the social studies, as required by both NASDTEC and NCSS. It seems probable that the relative "inadequacy" of the history/social science component results from the desire of the state departments to keep teaching field requirements small enough to encourage prospective teachers, especially those in social studies, to obtain certification in a second field to better meet the needs of small schools and to enhance job opportunities. This is an instance where, perhaps, neither the state departments nor the professional organization standards are wrong; they simply have some very different priorities.

One word of caution is needed in the interpretation of this report. What has been provided here is the status of minimum requirements for secondary social studies teacher certification in the fifty states. Teacher education programs must meet minimum state requirements, but in many cases university degree programs meet or exceed the guidelines of NASDTEC and NCSS, even when their state standards would seem to fall short of these. However, this should offer little encouragement to teacher educators who currently face rampant higher education budget cutting in most states. Such budget reductions will almost certainly result in the convenient elimination of components of teacher education programs not absolutely mandated by state standards. These reductions may render futile current and future attempts of NASDTEC and NCSS to establish realistic national guidelines for high quality programs for the certification of social studies teachers.

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